

Inmates help out with flood fighting efforts in Illinois



Photo by IDOC

July 13, 2014 from IDOC

Work crews were dispatched along the Mississippi as waters rose

Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) staff and inmate volunteer work crews have played a vital role in providing flood relief assistance to Illinois communities as flood waters rise this summer.

"When nature plays havoc, our employees are called out on a moment's notice," said IDOC Director S. A. "Tony" Godinez. "I commend their leadership, professionalism and commitment to support this effort. The agency's staff and inmate volunteer workers continue to do an exceptional job helping communities in their time of need. Everyone involved are ultimate team players, whether filling sandbags or working at flood sites, their efforts are most noteworthy."

On July 2, 2014, IDOC answered the call for help by dispatching two inmate work crews of 14 offenders from East Moline Correctional Center to Keithsburg, according to Lt. John Eilers, who serves as IDOC liaison to the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA). Inmates have logged more than 378 hours of assistance to the community by filling and placing sandbags and plastic on its levee, which protects the city from the Mississippi River.

(Story continued next page)

"City officials praised IDOC's efforts and stated if the department had not assisted, they wouldn't be able to save their city from the rising Mississippi waters," said Eilers, who coordinates IDOC's resources, work crews and supervisory staff assigned to communities. "The levee situation in Keithsburg has been critical at times; however, the operation by our inmate volunteers prevented the city from flooding in the days following our effort."

In addition, offenders at Hill Correctional Center began filling sandbags since July 3rd. The bags were sent to Gulfport, Keithsburg and New Boston. Currently, Gulfport and New Boston are receiving sufficient volunteer labor, but were in need of filled bags to shore up the levee which protects them from the Mississippi River. On July 4, offenders at Pittsfield Work Camp began a sandbag-filling operation as well, to support the Sny Levee District that also protects a 54-mile stretch along the Mississippi River. Offenders at both Hill and Pittsfield have filled more than 20,000 bags to support those communities and levee districts.

In addition to these efforts, staff and an inmate workcrew from Clayton Work Camp on July 7 began assisting the Indian Graves Drainage District, which is north of Quincy, by sandbagging a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile stretch of its levee in Adams County.

The partnership between IDOC and IEMA is unique. For years, Illinois was one of only several states in the country using inmate volunteers on disaster relief crews. As a result, IDOC and IEMA have built a solid foundation for helping hundreds of communities achieve successful results of demanding emergency relief projects.